

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for routing packets over a network, the packets comprising a first packet type and a second packet type, wherein each packet of the first packet type has a corresponding packet of the second packet type, the apparatus comprising:

- (a) a transceiver configured to receive and to forward each packet; and
- (b) a processor, coupled to the transceiver, that is arranged to perform actions,

including:

if the received packet is of the first packet type, forwarding the received packet to a first traffic manager that is selected based on at least a first field in the received packet, wherein forwarding the received packet further comprises hashing the first field in the received packet to obtain a hash key and employing the hash key to select the first traffic manager to which the packet is forwarded; and

if the received packet is of the second packet type, forwarding the received packet to a second traffic manager that is selected based on at least a second field in the received packet, wherein the first traffic manager is the same as the second traffic manager when the received packet of the first packet type corresponds to the received packet of the second packet type.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first field of the first packet type includes a first value substantially equivalent to a second value in the second field of a corresponding packet of the second packet type.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first packet type further comprises a packet in a first direction, and the second packet type further comprises a packet in a second direction.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising determining the packet type of the received packet in part by comparing a source port number with a destination port number.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first field further comprises at least one of a source IP address and a source port number, and the second field further comprises at least one of a destination IP address and a destination port number.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[6]]1, wherein employing the hash key to select the first traffic manager further comprises using the hash key as an index into an allocation table of traffic managers.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the processor is arranged to perform actions, further comprising, if the received packet is other than a TCP packet or a User Datagram Protocol (UDP) packet, forwarding the received packet to a third traffic manager that is selected using the first field and the second field in the received packet.

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the apparatus is arranged to operate as at least one of a distributor, a router, a bridge, a firewall, and a gateway.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the processor is arranged to perform actions, further comprising, if the received packet is associated with a pre-determined group characteristic, selecting the first traffic manager and the second traffic manager from a plurality of traffic managers that are partitioned into groups of traffic managers based in part on the pre-determined group characteristic.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the pre-determined group characteristic further comprises at least one of a Secure Socket Layer (SSL) packet, Domain Name System (DNS) packet, and a UDP packet.

12. (Currently Amended) A method of routing packets between a first network device and a second network device over a network, comprising:
receiving a packet;
if the received packet is from the first network device:

determining a target traffic manager based on at least a first field in the received packet, by hashing at least the first field in the received packet to obtain a hash key and employing the hash key to select the target traffic manager to which the received packet is forwarded, and

forwarding the received packet to the target traffic manager; and

if the received packet is from the second network device:

determining the target traffic manager based on at least a second field in the received packet, wherein the first field is different from the second field; and

forwarding the received packet to the target traffic manager, wherein the received packet from the second network device is forwarded to the same target traffic manager as is the received packet from the first network device.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising determining whether the received packet is from the first network device based on a comparison of a first packet header field and a second packet header field.

14. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the first field further comprises at least one of a source IP address and a source port number, and the second field further comprises at least one of a destination IP address and a destination port number.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, wherein determining the target traffic manager further comprises:

~~hashing the first field to obtain a hash key; and~~

employing the hash key as an index into an allocation table of traffic managers.

16. (Currently Amended) A method for routing a packet over a network, comprising:
(i) receiving the packet;
(ii) if the received packet is a packet of a first type, forwarding the received packet to a first traffic manager that is selected based in part on a first field in the received packet in part by hashing the first field to obtain a hash key and employing the hash key to select the first traffic manager, wherein a response packet to the received packet is forwarded to the first traffic manager; and
(iii) if the received packet is a packet of a second type, forwarding the received packet

(b) a plurality of traffic managers arranged to direct the packet to at least one of the plurality of servers; and

(c) a distributor, coupled to the plurality of traffic managers, that is arranged to perform actions, including:

(i) if the received packet is a first packet type, forwarding the received packet to a first traffic manager in the plurality of traffic managers that is selected using in part a first field in the received packet by hashing the first field to obtain a hash key used to select the first traffic manager, wherein a response packet to the received packet is forwarded to the first traffic manager; and

(ii) if the received packet is a second packet type, forwarding the received packet to a second traffic manager in the plurality of traffic managers that is selected using in part a second field in the received packet by in part hashing the second field to obtain another hash key used to select the second traffic manager, wherein the response packet is forwarded to the second traffic manager.

25. (Original) The system of claim 24, wherein the first packet type includes a source port number in the received packet that is greater than a destination port number in the received packet, and a second packet type includes a destination port number in the received packet that is greater than a source port number in the received packet.

26. (Original) The system of claim 24, wherein using in part the first field further comprises using a source IP address and a source port number in the received packet.

27. (Original) The system of claim 25, wherein using in part the second field further comprises using a destination IP address and a destination port number in the received packet.

28. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein in part hashing the first field further comprises:

hashing a source IP address and a source port number in the received packet to obtain [[a]]the hash key; and

employing the hash key to select the first traffic manager to which the received packet is forwarded.

29. (Original) The system of claim 28, wherein hashing the source IP address includes employing a hash function that is configured to load balance the plurality of traffic managers.

30. (Original) The system of claim 24, wherein the distributor is arranged to perform actions, further comprising, if the received packet is associated with a pre-determined group characteristic, selecting the traffic manager and the other traffic manager from a plurality of traffic managers that are partitioned into groups of traffic managers based in part on the pre-determined group characteristic.

31. - 33. (Canceled)